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HISTORICAL AND LEGENDARY CONTROVERSIES BETWEEN MOHAMMED AND THE RABBIS.

CONTROVERSIES between Jews and Gentiles are relics of the great efforts made during the whole of the Middle Ages to undermine the convictions of the Jews. The discussions described in the following pages are neither so profound nor of such magnitude as some of the famous public disputes held in the presence of the spiritual and temporal chiefs of the Christian world, but as they were contemporaneous with the birth of the youngest religion reared in the lap of the Bible, and destined to greatness, they deserve attention.

1. Among Mohammedan traditions we find the following : In order to obtain information regarding the character of the new prophet's proclamations, the Meccans resolved to send a deputation to the Jewish Rabbis in Medina, who were regarded as the highest theological authorities in those days. The messengers chosen were An-Nadhr b. Al-Hārith and Oqba b. Abi Moeit, two of Mohammed's bitterest foes. They were charged to acquaint the Rabbis with the discourses and characteristics of the Prophet, and to learn their opinion on the subject as based on their intimacy with the Sacred Writings. The Rabbis replied thus : " Ask Mohammed three questions, and if he can answer them, he is a true prophet, if not, he is but an impostor. Ask him (1) about the peoples of past times of which the most miraculous things are told ; (2) about the traveller who reached the extreme ends of east and west ; (3) about the Spirit and its nature."

Content with this reply, the tradition goes on, An-Nadhr and Oqba returned to Mecca, and their friends put these questions to the Prophet. He was greatly perplexed, not being able to give a suitable reply, and asked them to return on the morrow. But fifteen days passed ere the angel Gabriel came with a revelation. Mohammed reproached the angel for this delay, but the latter pleaded the divine command. He then revealed to the Prophet the eighteenth chapter of the Qorān.

Another version of this anecdote, which runs as follows, will clearly demonstrate how myths are evolved from historical incidents. The Meccans sent to the Jews to question them concerning the Prophet. They received the reply that his time had come, and that a description of him with all details was to be found in the Tōrāh. This evidence was accepted as a sign of his verity¹.

The critical attitude of the Jews is unceremoniously altered into an approving one. It is quite conceivable that Mohammed's enemies, being unable to fight him on his own ground, sent to those whom they considered more competent judges of his capacities, in the hope of receiving a stronger weapon from them than they had at their disposal. This probability is increased, as we find that An-Nadhr endeavoured to outrival the prophetic stories related by Mohammed, by telling the Meccans the adventures of Persian heroes. The questions, of whatever nature they may have been, placed Mohammed in such a dilemma that he only endeavoured to satisfy the querists with regard to the first², which he deemed the most urgent. By narrating the strange story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and the fabulous journey of Moses³ he evidently sought to put An-Nadhr's efforts in the shade. But he revenged himself on the two querists many years afterwards

¹ Ibn Hishām, pp. 192 sqq., 351, 397-399: Al-Baghawi's Commentary on Qor. xxvi. 197.

² The second question is quite apocryphal; as to the third see below.

³ See my *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Qorān*, p. 83.

by putting them alone to death when they fell into his hands among other prisoners of war.

The message to the Jews had the effect of arousing their curiosity with regard to the Meccan prophet, and it is said that they dispatched Mālik, a learned Rabbi, to Mecca with instructions to learn all he could about him. When he met Mohammed, the latter said to him: "I conjure thee by him who has given the Tōrāh to Moses, dost thou not find written in it that some Rabbis are very stout?" Mālik being a man of great corpulency and rather perplexed by so unexpected a question answered: "God has sent nothing down to man." On returning to Mecca, having given his report, he was violently attacked by his co-religionists for this clumsy reply. "What," they cried, "has not God revealed the Tōrāh to Moses, that thou shouldst make such an answer?" "He irritated me," the Rabbi retorted, "and this made me speak as I did." "If," they rejoined, "thou sayest such things in thine anger, thou art unworthy to be our Rabbi." He was thereupon deprived of his dignity¹.

The foolishness of Mālik's supposed answer may be mitigated by the fact that "to reveal" and "to send down" are synonymous in Arabic, and he probably wished to convey that God did not in reality send any book down from heaven. Yet the unsatisfactory result of Mālik's mission can hardly have been the real cause of his deposition, for another tradition relates that the Jews once asked Mohammed whether God had sent down *a book from heaven*, and he answered: "Yes!" whilst they replied: "*He has sent down no book from heaven*"².

We can at any rate see from the foregoing anecdotes that the preachings of the Meccan prophet caused a great stir among the citizens of Medina, both Jews and Arabs. "When the news," says Ibn Ishāq (one of the oldest and most renowned of Mohammed's biographers), "of the Prophet commenced to spread, people talked of him also in Medina.

¹ Al-Baghawi to Qor. vi. 31.

² Ibid., on the authority of the very untrustworthy Ibn Abbās.

No Arab knew more about him than the inhabitants of this city, because they heard their Jewish neighbours speak of him frequently¹."

The Prophet had taken up his abode in Medina, where unreserved hospitality had been offered him and his followers. The Jews sought to gauge his capacities by entering into discussions with him and asking questions. Some of these have been answered in the Qorān, and bear the stamp of authenticity, but the majority of queries were fabricated either in order to find explanations for revelations for which no other suitable reason was known, or to let the Prophet emerge as conqueror out of disputes invented for the edification of the Faithful.

Now the text of these first queries can only be reconstructed from those verses in the Qorān which are supposed to form their answers. This means that they were of such importance that Allāh had to take the trouble of settling them by special revelations. It is, of course, open to conjecture whether the questions, if genuine, were asked with serious intent. The Jews of Medina knew that Mohammed was not a child of their nation, and that he could therefore not fulfil all the conditions which tradition connected with the person of the Messiah. On the other hand it is doubtful whether they were fully able to judge of the real or pretended character of his prophecy. We must take into consideration that Mohammed's uncompromising denunciations of the dogma of the Trinity made him appear the harbinger of a reaction against the Christian faith which was divided into many sects antagonistically inclined towards each other. Of antipagan religions the Arab Jews only knew either their own or Christianity. They were therefore easily led to believe that a new prophet born and bred in paganism, and rejecting Christianity, must incline towards Judaism. Assuming this to be the case they had additional reasons for investigating his prophetic claims, it being necessary to learn how much

¹ I. Hish., p. 178.

of traditional Judaism was to be found in his teachings. This could only be ascertained by entering into discussions with him and catechizing him. The questions mentioned at the beginning of this article were, even according to tradition, not the only ones which Mohammed was unable to answer until the archangel came to the rescue. If theologians, in making a virtue out of necessity, changed his perplexity into a miracle, it at any rate proves that the story of his dilemma is authentic, and it also serves to place Mohammed higher in the eyes of true Believers, since Allāh sent His angel to his assistance. The Prophet himself was clever enough to turn this embarrassment to his advantage, taking the opportunity of comparing himself with Moses, who was also unable to answer certain questions without invoking divine aid: "Do you wish to question your Messenger, as Moses was questioned aforetime?" (Qor. ii. 102)¹.

The Jews had not long to wait ere an occasion arose for interviewing the Prophet. According to a tradition² which is, however, not particularly trustworthy, some Jews went to Mohammed soon after he had come to Medina and said to him: "Answer four questions, we will then believe in thee." "Will you take the covenant of Allāh, if I give you the information you require?" "Yes." "Ask your questions." They asked:—

- (1) What makes the child resemble its father or its mother?
- (2) How is thy sleep?
- (3) What has Israel forbidden itself?
- (4) What is the Spirit?

The Prophet's answer to query *two* is of interest for us; it runs thus: "Do you not know that the sleep of him whose equal you do not consider me is such that his eyes are asleep, whilst his heart is awake?" "By Allāh, yes!"

¹ See Lev. xxiv. 12; Num. xv. 32 sqq.; xxvii. 1-5. Mohammed had probably cases like Exod. xiv. 11; xvi. 20; xvii. 3; Num. ix. 7, 8; xiv. 3; xvi. 3, 13; xx. 4, 5; xxi. 5 in view.

² I. Hish., p. 375.

"Such is also my sleep, *my eyes sleep, but my heart is awake.*" This reply, which, as a proverbial sentence of the Prophet, is to be found in several works¹ is, as anybody can see, borrowed from Cant. v. 2². It is possible that he was acquainted with the verse. The change of the textual *ani* (I) into *'ēni* (my eye) was evidently due to incorrect hearing, and would support this theory. This mixture of truth and fiction is not surprising, and still less does it guarantee the veracity of the tradition of which it forms a part.

To the *third* query Mohammed replies by referring to the prohibition laid upon Israel forbidding him to taste the milk and flesh of the camel. In reality the question arose from Qor. iii. 87³, which is evidently only a reminiscence of Gen. ix, 4, or xxxii. 33. The fictitious character of the whole tradition becomes evident from the last question, which is a homily on Qor. xvii. 87⁴ revealed in Mecca, consequently years before the alleged interview, but which Mohammed is now supposed to have answered by giving the name of the angel Gabriel. "Gabriel," the Jews are said to have replied, "is our enemy, he comes with rigour and sheds blood⁵."

One day the Prophet entered the *Bait Midrās*⁶, and summoned those present to embrace Islamism. When

¹ See At-Tirmidi (ed. Cairo), II, p. 143; the Kāmil of Al-Mubarrad, ed. Wright, pp. 77, 741.

² Probably confounded with Ps. cxxiv. 4; cp. Qor. ii. 256 ("verse of the Throne") Slumber takes Him not nor sleep . . .

³ "All food was lawful to the children of Israel, save what Israel made unlawful to himself before that the law was revealed, &c." Cp. *Beiträge*, p. 76.

⁴ "They will ask thee of the Spirit, &c." See Moslim (ed. Cairo), II, p. 341.

⁵ On the alleged enmity between the angel Gabriel and the Jews see the remarks in Geiger, *Was hat Muhammed*, &c., pp. 13 sq. and 202; cp. also Brecher, *Das Transcendentale*, &c., p. 24 sqq. The myth of this hostility is built on Qor. ii. 91, which probably only refers to the hostile attitude assumed by the Jews towards the revelations brought by the angel to Mohammed. See also below.

⁶ I. Hish., p. 383, and Al-Baidhāwī's Commentary to Qor. iii. 22.

asked to define his faith he said: "The religion of Abraham." "Abraham was a Jew," they replied. This Mohammed denied, and asked them to let the Tōrāh be umpire; but they declined to do so, and Mohammed thereupon revealed Qor. iii. 22, 58-60¹.

Some Jews of the tribe of the B. Koreiza asked Mohammed: "Shall we worship thee in the same manner as the Christians adore Jesus?" "It is not," he replied (Qor. iii. 73), "right for a man that God should give him a book, and judgment and prophecy, and that then he should say to men: Be ye servants of mine rather than of God, but be ye rather *Rabbāni* with regard to studying the Book and expounding it (only)²."

Without attempting to extract the elements of truth in these two traditions, I will only point out that the second refers to something totally different, viz. the charge Mohammed brought against the Jews of worshipping the Rabbinical law and its representatives. This is confirmed by a series of similar revelations which systematically endeavour to place the Jews on a level with the heathens³.

Hardly better authenticated is the following anecdote. The Jews said: "God has covenanted with us not to believe in a prophet until he brings a sacrifice which the fire devours" (Qor. iii. 179). Since no such condition is laid down in the Bible, we can only assume that Mohammed, when learning the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, misconstrued the same in the manner alluded to in his answer. No more credence is to be attached to the demand the Jews are said to have made together with other opponents, that he should bring a book from heaven and divide rivers⁴.

¹ I. Hish., p. 384.

² i. e. without assuming any theocratic authority.

³ See Qor. ii. 257, 259; v. 65. For the supposed apotheosis of the Rabbis Mohammed uses the term *tāghoot* (Aram. *tā'ootha'*, which occurs frequently in the Targums for "idol." The Jewish poet, Ka'b b. Al-Ashraf, whom Mohammed caused to be assassinated, is styled "the *tāghoot* of the Jews" (Moslim, II, p. 70).

⁴ I. Hish., p. 379.

This again is a forced exegesis of Qor. xvii. 92-95¹ of Meccan origin. It is but natural that one of the first requests of a people living in an arid district should be for the new prophet to produce wells and gardens. It is on the other hand improbable that Jews should have asked for a divine book, as there is no instance to be found in biblical or post-biblical writings of such a request having been made.

Jabal b. Abi Qusheir and Shamwīl b. Zeid, tradition relates, came to Mohammed and asked him about the "Hour (of Judgment)." This brought from Mohammed the reply (Qor. vii. 186): The knowledge thereof is only with my Lord; none shall manifest it at its time but he; it is heavy in the heavens and the earth, it will not come to you save on a sudden (187)². They will ask as though thou wert privy to it; say: the knowledge thereof is only with God, but most folk do not know³.

One day Mahmood b. Saihān and others addressed the following question to the Prophet: "Is it true, O Mohammed, that what thou bringst is a truth from God, since we do not find it so perfectly arranged as the Tōrāh?" "By Allāh," he answered, "you must know that it is divine; you find it written in your own books, and if mankind and Jinn would unite, they could not achieve anything similar to it" (Qor. xvii. 90)⁴.

Some Jews—whose names are not mentioned—asked Mohammed: "Who has created God?" This question enraged him so much that he changed colour and was

¹ "(92) And they say: We will by no means believe in thee until thou makest spring forth for us from the earth a well, (93) or there arise for thee a garden of palms and grapes, and rivers come gushing out amidst them, (94) or thou make the sky to fall down upon us in pieces, as thou didst pretend, and bring us Allāh and the angels before us, (95) or there be made for thee a house of gold, or thou climb up into the heaven; and even then we will not believe in thy climbing, until thou send down on us a book that we may read."

² Cp. Qor. xvi. 79 and 1 Cor. xv. 52.

³ I. Hish., p. 398.

⁴ Ibid., p. 399.

unable to reply. But the angel Gabriel came and revealed to him, ch. cxii—

Say, he is Allāh, One!

Allāh the Eternal!

He begets not and is not begotten!

Nor is there like unto him any one!

Now this little revelation is much older, having been revealed in Mecca chiefly as a protest against the dogma of the Trinity; but if the question is historical, the *recitation* of these verses was evidently an afterthought. The Jews, the tradition continues, asked further about God's limbs, but Mohammed, much put out, replied with Qor. xxxix. 67: And they do not value God at his true value, while the earth all of it is but a handful for him on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in his *right hand*!¹

The following query was evidently only asked in derision, but such is the spirit of Moslim tradition, that the very mockery is turned into account to prove the veracity of Mohammed's prophecy. A Jew came to the Prophet and asked him the names of the stars which Joseph saw bowing before him in his dream. Again Mohammed was unable to give an answer until Gabriel, always helpful, breathed the names in his ear. Mohammed sent for the Jew and gave him the names asked for².

Another desired information about the nature of thunder. "It is an angel, who is appointed over the clouds," the Prophet answered. "He holds in his hand a scarf with which he draws the clouds and guides them wherever God commands, and the roar is his voice³."

2. It is but natural that among the Medinian Jews there were many who could not fail to perceive that Mohammed's cause had made so great headway that it was bound to

¹ I. Hish., p. 400.

² As Suyooti's *Itqān*, p. 932.

³ Ibid., p. 933, cp. Ta'anith, fol. 7 b and 16 a; *Itq.* p. 935, "Where will mankind be," asked a Rabbi of the Prophet, "on the day when the earth will be changed?" "Scattered about in darkness," was the reply.

be successful in the end in spite of all obstacles. For people without strong convictions such a cause will always have great attraction. But it must be borne in mind that the Jews in Medina numbered among their ranks a great many who had adopted Judaism only in preference to the worn-out paganism of the country, or on account of family alliances, and had thus become members of one of the Jewish clans. They further foresaw that the outlook of their brethren for the future was anything but bright. For the very first public speeches Mohammed made in Medina breathed so much hatred and hostility¹ that the Jews had everything to fear. It is, therefore, not surprising that some were prepared to forsake their own faith for Islamism. Nor is it in the least strange that Moslim tradition has bestowed undue attention on these proselytes, and stamps them all as leaders of their people, and great Rabbis or martyrs. We are in possession of various lists of Jewish converts to Islamism, but the total number of the latter does not even reach ten. Two of them were of Arab origin, and their convictions appear to have been so weak that even Moslim historians rank them among the "Hypocrites²."

It is a prominent feature of Moslim tradition whenever the characteristics of a class of individuals are under discussion, that one person is made the representative of the common idea and held responsible for anything said or done by any person belonging to that class, or anything that might have been said or done by them. Historical veracity is in this respect not so much sought after, the chief object being to throw a brilliant light on a certain point. In this manner a member of the tribe of the B. Qainoqā, of the name Al-Hoṣein, who called himself

¹ Qor. ii. 5-15.

² When, on one occasion, a camel of Mohammed had run away, Zeid b. Al-Loseit, one of these "hypocrites," said: "Mohammed pretends to bring us news from heaven, but does not know where his camel is." See Uyoon al-Athār (Cod. Brit. Mus. Or. 3015), fol. 84^r.

a descendant of Joseph¹, has under the name of *Abd Allāh b. Salām* been made the representative of Jewish proselytes to Islamism, and is consequently a very important person. How far he is responsible for all that is put into his mouth in favour of his adopted creed is too uncertain to allow of a positive verdict, but he has been made the subject of a large number of religious legends.

As regards Abd Allāh's conversion we will first hear the account given by himself, though the form in which it is written, must be dated from long after the demise of the Prophet. His words are as follows²: "When I heard what was told about the new Messenger, I recognized him by his description and the time of his appearance. I concealed my thoughts from every one before his arrival in Medina, but when I heard that he had arrived, I found myself on the top of a palm-tree, at the foot of which stood my aunt Khālida, "Allāh is the greatest," I cried. My aunt reproved me with the words: "Shame upon thee, thou couldst say no more, if Moses himself had come." "By Allāh," I replied, "he is the brother of Moses and brings us his faith." "Is he then the Prophet, whose arrival has been announced for this time?" she asked. "Yes." "If this be so!" I betook myself at once to the Prophet, professed the Moslim creed, and converted my family, but kept it secret. I informed the Prophet that my former co-religionists were slanderers, and in order to convince him of this, I invited him to accompany me to them and to inquire about me, but without telling them of my conversion. This he did. When asked about me, they said: "Al-Hosēin is our chief, the son of our chief and our Rabbi." When I heard this, I came out of my hiding-place and informed them that Mohammed was the Messenger of God. "Thou liest," they cried, and abused me. "Did I not tell thee," I addressed the Prophet, "that they were liars, slanderers and infidels?"

¹ Uyoon, fol. 82^r, Ibn Hajar's *Iṣāba*.

² *Al-Bokhāri*, ed. Krehl, III, pp. 42-50.

Another account of Abd Allāh's conversion, somewhat at variance with the foregoing, is the following¹: When he heard of Mohammed's arrival he went to the latter and asked him three questions, which only a prophet could answer. (1) "Which are the conditions of the Hour²?" "A fire," answered Mohammed, "which will devour mankind from east to west." (2) "Which is the first food of the inhabitants of Paradise?" "The liver of a certain fish³." (3) "What makes the child resemble its father or its mother⁴?" Mohammed also answered this query satisfactorily.

Now a peculiar light is thrown on these reports by two others, according to which Abd Allāh's conversion did not take place until *eight years later*, or two years before Mohammed's death⁵, a period when Islamism had gained already so much secular power that its final success was assured. These versions, going as they do against the spirit of Islamism, deserve more credit than the others, and are at the same time sufficient to explain Abd Allāh's motives.

The foregoing is of no small importance. Abd Allāh during these two years gave Mohammed a good deal of information from Jewish sources, and although this came too late to be made use of in the Qorān, much of it reappears in traditional sayings handed down on behalf of the Prophet. After the death of the latter Abd Allāh occupied himself with producing what I should like to call a kind of Moslim Agāda not only in the manner of the Midrash, but actually on fulcrums taken from Bible and Talmud. Apart from the instances of this class occurring in this article, I reckon among them the more elaborate

¹ Al-Bokhāri, III, p. 196.

² See above.

³ This is evidently borrowed from the Jewish legend of the Leviathan or Behemoth (Job xl. 15), which is to be prepared for the food of the pious in Paradise. See Wayyiqr. R., ch. xiii, Tanḥuma *Shemini*; cp. also below.

⁴ See above.

⁵ Isāba.

legends of *Halīma*, or the cleansing of the heart, and *The Monk Bahīra*¹.

In consequence of the great services which Abd Allāh rendered to Islamism, his place ranks high among true believers. The most famous works on tradition have devoted special chapters to the "High qualities of Abd Allāh b. Salām²." Even in his lifetime he is said to have been assured by the Prophet of his admission into Paradise, a privilege allowed only to the foremost champions of the faith³.

There exists a little anonymous book, printed in Cairo (1876?), containing queries which Abd Allāh is said to have addressed to the Prophet. A glance at it shows it to be an extension of those questions which he is supposed to have put before Mohammed prior to his conversion. We need not emphasize that Abd Allāh had no share in the compilation of this volume, which is a rather late fabrication and holds the rank between a sacred reading book and catechism. The magnifying power of religious fiction is truly prodigious, but the imagination displayed by the writer of this little volume recalls the most extravagant reveries of the Arabian Nights or the wildest fancies of some portions of the Qorān itself.

In order to render as faithfully as possible the spirit of the book—which is at the same time that of a whole branch of Moslim theological literature—I deemed it best to give a translation of the introduction, and to attach to the same a selection from those questions which, on account of their object or affinity to the Jewish Agāda, deserve some attention. Many, however, are nothing better than puerile conundrums, too absurd for rendition.

"Praise be to Allāh in abundance and salvation upon his servants whom he has chosen. The following are the queries which our lord Abd Allāh b. Salām has addressed

¹ More on this subject will be found in the researches on the composition and exegesis of the Qorān, which I hope to publish shortly.

² Moslim, II, p. 258.

³ Ibid.

to our Prophet Mohammed. They are full of useful hints and important information. May the lustre and splendour of this book grow and prompt the reader to find convincing arguments.

"It is handed down on behalf of Abd Allāh b. Abbās¹ as follows: When Mohammed sent written messages to the Kings of the Unbelievers inviting them to worship the King of Kings², he also wrote to the Jews of Kheibar³, since they were nearest to him of all infidels. The Prophet asked the angel Gabriel what he should write, and the angel dictated to him the following: 'In the name of Allāh, the Merciful, Compassionate. Mohammed, the Messenger of Allāh to the Jews of Kheibar. The earth is Allāh's, and he gives it in possession to whom he wishes of his servants⁴. The pure religion is Allāh's, as also the reward for piety. *Salām* upon him who follows his guidance and obeys the Highest King. There exists no power nor might except through Allāh.' Mohammed wrote, sealed, and sent the letter to the Jews of Kheibar. Upon receiving the same they brought it to Abd Allāh b. Salām, who was their Elder, Rabbi, and most learned of them. His name was *Ashmawīl*⁵. They said to him: 'This letter has reached us from Mohammed, read it to us.' When he had done so, he added: 'Do you not see—what you already

¹ Cousin of Mohammed, and one of the Fathers of Moslim tradition. His reputation as traditionist is, however, of the worst; see Sprenger, *Das Leben u. die Lehre d. Moh.*, I, p. xvii.

² In the year 7 of the Hijra Mohammed is said to have sent letters to many princes and chiefs, among them the emperor of Byzantium, inviting them to Islamism.

³ There exists another letter which Mohammed is supposed to have written to the Jews of Kheibar (I. Hish., p. 376), a place several days' journey north of Medina, which he conquered in the same year. A French translation of this letter I have published in my "*Essai sur l'histoire des Juifs de Médina*," *R. E. J.*, VII, p. 113 sq.

⁴ See *Qor.* xxi. 105.

⁵ Samuel; his true name we have seen above. One Shamwīl b. Zeid was a member of the tribe of the B. Koreiza, and one of those who asked Mohammed about the "Hour" (see above).

knew—that the Tōrāh contains signs such as you cannot deny, and which now appear through Mohammed, who was announced by Moses? Should this be the case, we will follow him.’ ‘But if he *abrogates*¹ our Book,’ they replied, ‘and prohibits what has been permitted to us, what then?’ ‘You prefer,’ Abd Allāh said, ‘this world to the next², and punishment to compassion. Mohammed is an unlettered man who can neither read nor write³. You know the Tōrāh by heart, you can write and read, and I can draw from the Tōrāh 1404 most profound queries which I will put to him. If he is able to clear up all that is obscure, then he is the man whom Moses has predicted, and we will freely believe in him. Should he, however, prove unable to comply with our request, we will not forsake our religion, and not follow him for one moment.’

“By general consent the deepest problems to be found were collected and handed over to Abd Allāh, who went up to Medina. When he visited the Mosque and saw the shining lights of the Prophet and his companions around him, his heart inclined towards Islamism. He greeted him with *Salām* and introduced himself. They replied to his *Salām* with additional greeting⁴, Mohammed bade him sit down and asked him what he wished. He was, Abd Allāh said, a learned Jew, well read in the Tōrāh, and was the bearer of a message on the part of his co-religionists with queries which they were unable to explain. They therefore

¹ *Abrogation* is one of the fundamental principles of Islamism, abolishing those precepts of the Bible which Mohammed found impracticable. A concise illustration of this may be found in the conversation between the king of the Khazars and the Moslim doctor (see Hirschfeld, *Das Buch Al-Chazari*, p. 9).

² Lit. “the last” (after which there is no other).

³ *Ummīy*, see Qor. vii. 156, and Geiger, l. c., p. 27. Mohammed's inability to write and read, based on Qor. xxix. 47, ranks among religious axioms. The author of the little book either forgets this for a moment, or the letter must also be a miracle, since it was written at the dictation of the angel.

⁴ According to Qor. iv. 88.

requested Mohammed to expound these matters to them. The Prophet told him to ask his questions, since the angel Gabriel had already informed him of the same, but if he preferred, he could hear them all from Mohammed before he opened his mouth. Abd Allāh assented. 'Thou comest to me, Mohammed continued, with 1404 queries which thou hast copied from the Tōrāh with thy pen.' Abd Allāh turned his face away, wept, and said: 'Thou art right, O Prophet!' Then he professed the creed. Mohammed said: 'Allāh has sent me as Prophet, and Messenger, and Seal of the Prophets: hast thou not read in the Tōrāh: Mohammed is the Messenger of Allāh, &c.'"

A. Is this a revelation? M. Yes!

A. How many prophets were there? M. 144,000¹.

A. How many of them were Messengers? M. 313.

A. What is *Islām*²?

M. To testify that there is no God beside Allāh, and that Mohammed is his Servant and Messenger, saying prayers, giving alms, fasting in Ramadhān, and pilgrimage.

A. What is *Imān* (Faith)?

M. Belief in Allāh, his angels, writings, messengers, and appointed last day.

A. How many books have been revealed?

M. 104, viz.: 50 through Seth, 30 through Henoch, 20 through Abraham, the Psalms through David, the Tōrāh through Moses, the Gospel through Jesus, and the Furqān through Mohammed.

A. Why is it called *Furqān*³?

M. Because the *Sooras*⁴ and verses are divisioned, which is not the case in other books.

A. Which things has God created with his own hand?

¹ The Talmud, Meg. 14 b, only knows forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses: but see 1 Kings xviii. 4.

² Lit. "resignation," but the ecclesiastical definition of the word includes these five duties, which form a *conditio sine qua non* for every Moslim.

³ See Geiger, l.c., p. 56; *Itqān*, p. 96 sq.

⁴ Chapters.

M. Paradise with the tree *Toobā*¹ in it, the frame of Adam, the heavens, and he also wrote the Tablets.

A. Why was he called Adam?

M. Because he was created from the clay and the crust of the earth².

A. Which place has seen the sun but once, and never more until the last day?

M. The place where Pharaoh was drowned³.

A. Which part of the earth was favoured with a revelation?

M. The mount Sinai was commanded to raise Moses up to heaven in order to receive the tablets.

A. Which created thing is wood at the top and Spirit at the bottom?

M. The staff of Moses.

A. What is the centre of the world?

M. The *Bait al moqaddas*⁴.

A. What is under the earth?

M. A sea called *Al-Qamqām* in which is a fish called *Bahmoot*⁵; his head is in the east, his tail in the west, he carries the earth, seas, darkness, and mountains on his back. Between his eyes are seven seas, on each shore 70,000 cities, in each city 70,000 quarters, in each quarter 70,000 kings, and all say: There is no God beside Allāh.

H. HIRSCHFELD.

¹ See Wolff, *Muhammedan. Eschatologie*, p. 126, but evidently taken from Gen. iii. 6. Al-Shahrastāni (ed. Cureton), p. 79: It is related that the Prophet affirmed that Allāh had written the Tōrāh with his own hand, and that he created the garden of Eden and Adam with his own hand.

² *ādam* means reddish brown.

³ See Sprenger, l. c., III, p. lxxxii.

⁴ See Sanh. 37 b: Why is it called Sanhedrin? Because it sits in the navel of the world. Cp. Shir Hash. R. to vii. 3.

⁵ See above.